

DG1-2 laptop is 'just a pretty face'

If you were to judge all laptop computers by just two criteria — beautiful design and an easy-to-read screen — the Data General One Model 2, or DG1-2 for short, would win hands down. This machine is a show-stopper. It has a sleek, modern design and an orange on black LD (electroluminescent) screen that's easier to read than most other laptop machines.

In fact, it's so unusual that if you use it in a public place, you'll attract a crowd.

The DG1-2 is a vast improvement over earlier models from Data General that had difficult-to-read LCD (liquid crystal display) screens. Also, although not all laptops are compatible with IBM PCs (which means that you can't easily run the same programs on both), the DG1-2 allows you to swap documents between machines. Thus, if you're in the middle of a project on

your office computer and must take a business trip, it's easy to take your work along.

Well, so much for the good features. After obtaining a machine from the manufacturer for review, I put the DG1-2 through its paces over a several month period, using it almost daily.

Here is a short list of its drawbacks:

✓ Slow. Slow. Slow.

My biggest difficulty was trying, without success, to get used to the slow processing speed of the machine. Remember what it was like when you used an older model PC without a hard disk, before the XTs, ATs and faster

clones were released? That's how it is all the time with the DG1-2. Fast clock-speed chips, common on other laptops, are not yet available with this machine.

✓ Poorly laid-out keyboard. If the DG1-2 were your only computer, the keyboard would not be a

problem. You would simply get used to the odd placement of the keys. But, when I tried to go back and forth between the DG1-2 and my desktop machines, the DG1-2 drove me bananas. The cursor keys, Insert and Delete keys are in positions unlike any other keyboard. And the PgUp, PgDn, Home, and End keys require you to hold down the Shift key while using the cursor keys.

✓ No built-in 5¼-inch floppies. Most other desktop IBM PCs and PC-compatible machines, with the exception of the new line of IBM PCs just announced, use 5¼-inch floppy disks. The advantage of having a laptop that uses the same size disks as your desktop machine is that you can easily move data between the two machines. Otherwise, you also need a machine somewhere else in your office that has both size disk drives installed so that copies can be made. The DG1-2 uses 3½-inch floppies only, just like the new IBM machines. Thus, it's compatible with the next generation of PCs, but still cum-

bersome for use today.

The final kicker is price. The DG1-2 with EL screen, one diskette drive, 640 K of memory and a 10 Megabyte hard drive retails for \$4,635, significantly higher than most competitive machines that don't have the other drawbacks.

But there is a pleasant development on the horizon that could alleviate some of my key complaints. Data General is due to release a faster version of the machine. If they can also bring the price in line with some of their more aggressive Japanese competitors, it might be worth considering.

In the meantime, for me and for most of my clients, the DG1-2's beautiful design and easy-to-read screen do not outweigh its drawbacks.



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